United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1322
2 February 1993

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Yugoslav peace talks to resume at United Nations Headquarters at end of this week, according to Co-Chairmen Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen.

+ Bosnia and Herzegovina asks Security Council and United States not to allow Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to participate in Yugoslav peace talks in New York, on basis of his identification as war criminal; in separate development, urges Security Council to secure safety of 5,000 Muslims "ethnically cleansed" from city of Trebinje.

+ Four United Nations relief staff killed in Afghanistan yesterday by unidentified gunmen; Secretary-General appeals to all parties to cease hostilities and resume political negotiations; senior United Nations officials in Jalalabad to request full investigation of incident.

+ Vladimir Petrovsky to succeed Antoine Blanca as Director-General of United Nations Office at Geneva; Marrack Goulding appointed Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Kofi Annan to become Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, according to announcements made today.

+ Commission on Human Rights began forty-ninth session yesterday in Geneva; decides to add new item to agenda entitled "the situation of human rights in territory of former Yugoslavia".

+ World Food Programme to continue relief operations to people displaced by civil strife in Sri Lanka; to provide relief food to drought-affected persons in Nepal.

+ Awards for excellence in public service advertising promoting United Nations goals presented by Department of Public Information.

* * *

Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on former Yugoslavia, told correspondents today that the peace talks aimed at ending the ten-month conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, would

(more)

For information media--not an official record

resume at United Nations Headquarters in New York, probably at the end of this week, and was expected to involve representatives of all the parties.

At a press conference at Headquarters, the Co-Chairmen said they had come to the conclusion that staying in Geneva any longer was simply "delaying the peace process". They had proposed to bring the negotiations to Headquarters in order to discuss the situation with the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Vance said the Croatian Government had been asked to send its representatives to Headquarters to discuss the 'Vance Plan'. The parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina had also been invited to come and consult with members of the Security Council on the various significant issues. He emphasized that if the 'Vance Plan' was going to succeed, it needed a Security Council resolution supporting it.

The two Co-Chairmen said that United States Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in his discussions with them yesterday, had indicated that his Government was currently planning its policy with regard to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* * *

Meanwhile, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has asked the Security Council and the United States not to allow the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, to attend the Conference on Yugoslavia in New York, on the grounds that he has been identified as a war criminal.

The Bosnian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mohamed Sacirbey, told correspondents at a press conference at Headquarters this afternoon that the United States State Department had been asked not to issue Mr. Karadzic a visa on the basis that he had been identified by various human rights organizations as well as by former United States Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger as an individual to be prosecuted for war crimes.

He said his Government had also asked the Security Council not to allow Mr. Karadzic to be heard in the peace talks, even if he were allowed to enter the United States, "because he does not represent a legitimate government".

In a separate development, Mr. Sacirbey has urged the Security Council to take immediate steps to secure the safety of about 5,000 Muslim citizens from the town of Trebinje who, he said, had been "ethnically cleansed" from their homes by Serbian and Montenegrin paramilitary forces.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 1 February, Mr. Sacirbey said there was also an "imminent threat" to the refugees near the area of Montenegro and Serbia by the presence of Serbian and Montenegrin paramilitary forces plotting the "physical extermination" of those refugees. Document S/25210

* * *

(more)

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed deep shock at the brutal murder of four United Nations relief workers, including a British and a Dutch national, by unidentified armed men yesterday near Jalalabad in Afghanistan.

In a statement issued by his Spokesman, the Secretary-General urgently appealed to all parties concerned to cease hostilities immediately and resume political negotiations. Concerned at the continued fighting in Kabul, which is exacting a heavy toll on the civilian population, he warned that the cycle of violence and lawlessness could also spread to other parts of the country.

The casualties included a British national working for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat); a Dutch national, who was working as a consultant on water resources; and two Afghan drivers working for Habitat. A fifth member of the party managed to escape.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, has strongly condemned the brutal killings which, he said, "once again highlight the increasing dangers faced by humanitarian workers". On behalf of the Secretary-General, he requested that a full investigation be conducted by the national authorities and that additional measures of security be taken by them to ensure the safety of all relief workers in Afghanistan.

* * *

The Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Antoine Blanca, will leave the Organization at the end of February after several years of service, first as Director-General for International Economic Cooperation and subsequently as Director-General for the United Nations Office at Geneva, according to an announcement today at Headquarters. He will be returning to the service of his Government.

According to the announcement by the Secretary-General's Spokesman, Mr. Blanca will be succeeded as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva by Vladimir Petrovsky, who will bring to that position his extensive political experience, particularly of European affairs, and his special expertise in disarmament and security matters.

Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Marrack Goulding, will be appointed Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The announcement said Mr. Goulding's valuable experience acquired in seven years of planning and managing peace-keeping operations would be a great asset as he was assuming important responsibilities in the peace-making field.

Mr. Goulding will be succeeded by Kofi Annan, who has been serving as Assistant Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations. He will bring to that post his experience in financial management, acquired during his previous service as Comptroller, the announcement said.

All the appointments are to become effective on 1 March 1993.

(more)

* * *

The Commission on Human Rights began its forty-ninth session yesterday in Geneva by adopting its agenda and electing its bureau for its six-week session. The Commission decided to add a new item to its agenda entitled "the situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia". The debate on that issue is expected to take place early next week, when Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the Commission's Special Rapporteur on the matter, will be in Geneva to report on his latest mission to the area.

Among other items on the Commission's agenda are human rights violations in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, and in southern Africa. In addition, the Commission will discuss the human rights situation in southern Lebanon, Cuba, Romania, Albania, Iran, Iraq, Myanmar, Haiti, East Timor, Afghanistan, Equatorial Guinea and Cyprus.

Several representatives opposed the participation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) in the work of the Commission, reminding that the General Assembly had barred that country from participating in its work, pending its application for membership to the United Nations.

In an opening statement, the new Chairman, Mohamed Ennaceur (Tunesia), said the Commission should not limit itself to the simple condemnation of human rights violations. Its role should be to prevent rather than to condemn; to analyse objectively the many causes which led to human rights violations; and to evaluate progress achieved and the gaps which remained. Ultimately, the Commission's decisions should contribute to the universal respect for human rights in all regions of the world.

* * *

The World Food Programme (WFP) today announced it would continue its emergency relief operations to supply food for 60,000 Sri Lankans who have fled the fighting areas and are staying in welfare centres.

The Programme -- the food aid organization of the United Nations -- will provide rice, sugar and pulses to cover the basic needs of the displaced people for six months. The Government has agreed to supplement this assistance with rations of coconut oil.

Since June 1990, when the fighting began between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the security situation in the North and East has not improved significantly. According to the WFP, the displaced people are not likely to be returning home soon.

The Agency also announced that it would provide emergency food to nearly 500,000 drought-affected persons in Nepal for a three-month period at a total cost of $3.3 million.

For the second consecutive year, the Agency said, Nepal has been hit by drought which has reduced cereal production by almost 12 per cent and caused

(more)

* * *

widespread food shortages. Cereal production was the lowest since 1987, it said.

* * *

The New York-based advertising agency DDB Needham Worldwide has been awarded first prize for excellence in public service advertising which promotes the ideal and goals of the United Nations. The award, for a series of public service advertisements on AIDS, was presented at the New York Festival Awards ceremony last week by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, Eugeniusz Wyzner.

* *** *